United Nations S/PV.3745 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3745th Meeting

Thursday, 6 March 1997, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wlosowicz	(Poland)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Larraín
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Costa Rica	Mr. Berrocal Soto
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Thiebaud
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Portugal	Mr. Soares
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

97-85198 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was suspended at 6.35 p.m., 5 March 1997, and resumed at 10.50 a.m., 6 March 1997.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have just received a letter from the representative of Malta in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pace (Malta) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, Sir, I should like to convey to you my most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am firmly convinced that your well-known wisdom and experience and your knowledge of world affairs will ensure the successful completion of the Council's work.

I also take pleasure in extending my thanks and paying tribute to my dear brother, the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, for his competence in leading this body during a period when its activity was on the increase.

At a time when hopes were being raised that the peace process was once again slowly moving in the right direction — in spite of all the obstacles created by the Israeli authorities, which had almost brought the process to a standstill — these authorities decided to build a major settlement within East Jerusalem. It appears as if the goal of this serious step is to undermine the peace process as a whole and to provoke the international community, and in particular the Council, which has repeatedly condemned the settlements policy.

Indeed, this policy cannot be taken in isolation. It is part of the considered, calculated plan followed by the Israeli authorities since the occupation of Jerusalem and the other Arab territories — a plan designed to continue the settlement policy, whatever the cost, whatever the international reaction and whatever the grave dangers involved for peace.

Everyone — including the Israeli authorities — knows that the settlements policy flagrantly contravenes the basic tenets of the peace process. This policy is contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords and the American guarantees submitted to the Arab parties at the Madrid Peace Conference. This policy is also quite clearly a violation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions, which have consistently stated that the measures and steps taken by the Israeli authorities, including the expropriation of land and property, are null and void.

In this connection, we should like to refer to an important resolution adopted by the Council. Resolution 476 (1980) forbids any alteration of the geographic or demographic nature of the city of Jerusalem. Consequently, this latest Israeli measure is null and void and can receive no international recognition.

Apart from the fact that this decision by Israel represents a flagrant violation of international law and of the Fourth Geneva Convention, we are even more concerned at the fact that the proposed Israeli settlement is intended to house 35,000 Jews from all different areas. It is part of a broader project that began in 1967, under which more than 39,000 housing units have been built in East Jerusalem. This project would open up Jerusalem to tens of thousands of Jewish settlers. It is designed radically to change the demographic nature of the Holy City, thereby serving the purposes of the Israeli authorities: to use this new status as a means for manoeuvres and pressure during the upcoming negotiations on the future of the city.

Algeria reaffirms its dedication to a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic choice of the Arab nation — a peace based on internationally binding resolutions and on the principle of land for peace. Algeria therefore vigorously condemns this latest Israeli measure and demands that it be rescinded.

The Israeli authorities have been pursuing a policy of provocation and of *fait accompli* vis-à-vis the international community and internationally binding resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1073 (1996), which has not yet been implemented. In the face of the grave risks and dangers that the latest Israeli

measures pose for the peace process and for security and stability in the region as a whole, our Council must today fully discharge its responsibilities and react immediately and in a practical manner to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli authorities so that they rescind their decision. This would reaffirm the credibility of the Council in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security and in restoring justice and the rule of law.

The President: I thank the representative of Algeria for the kind words he addressed to me. The next speaker is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, our heartfelt congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We would like also to express our sincere thanks to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for the exemplary way in which he conducted the business of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today to consider the decision of the Israeli Government to establish a new Jewish settlement comprising 6,500 housing units in the southern part of occupied East Jerusalem — specifically in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim — only days before the beginning of the final status negotiations. The Council's consideration of this subject is an expression of the deep concern of its members regarding the grave consequences to the peace process of the Israeli decision. In particular, that decision runs counter to the clear political and legal principles reaffirmed in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to the principle that territory may not be acquired by force. All this makes it clear that such measures are both illegal and null and void.

This Israeli scheme, aimed at the Judaization of East Jerusalem and the consolidation of the occupation is a sequel to previous settlement schemes, including the opening of the tunnel under the Haram al-Sharif by Israeli forces in defiance of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996); the demolition of the building belonging to the Burj al-Laqlaq association within the walls of the Old City; the denial of the right of residence to Palestinians; the expropriation of their land, in particular in East Jerusalem in preparation for an illegal campaign for the absorption of thousands of new Jewish immigrants at the expense of the Palestinian people. In addition, Israeli authorities continue to isolate the city of East Jerusalem from the other cities of the West Bank and to deny Palestinians access to the Holy City. Recently, the Israeli authorities closed the offices of Palestinian national institutions.

All these measures are null and void. They have also been rejected not only by the Palestinian and Arab peoples of the occupied territories, but also by all peace-loving countries and peoples of the world. Given the spiritual and cultural importance of this Holy City for the three divine religions, it should be a city of peace, tolerance and coexistence for the peoples of the region instead of a cause for war and conflict.

The United Arab Emirates condemns all these Israeli infractions. We consider them to be flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions, international law, the Madrid framework and the agreements concluded by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. Indeed, these measures strip the peace process of all content. They are provocations aimed at the Palestinian and Arab peoples and can only result in an escalation of violence and tension in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. They also threaten international and regional peace and security. They run counter not only to the agreements reached between the Palestinians and the Israelis, but also to internationally recognized human rights norms, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons In Time of War, and the Hague Convention of 1907.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its full support for the demands of the Palestinian people, who reject all these unjust settlement activities in their territories, and in particular in Jerusalem. The United Arab Emirates looks forward to the full assumption by the international community and the sponsors of the peace process of their responsibilities with regard to the question of Palestine and its many facets in order to ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations under the peace agreements and the relevant resolutions of international law providing for the immediate cessation of the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements and the dismantling of those that exist within the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories.

The Israeli Government's continued defiance of the resolutions of the Security Council and the relevant agreements — in total disregard of all moral norms and values, as well as the principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law — is indeed a dangerous phenomenon. It not only undermines the peace process, but creates an abnormal environment in international

relations. The Security Council is therefore urgently required to adopt the measures necessary to persuade Israel to abrogate its recent decision concerning East Jerusalem and immediately to stop all its other settlement practices and legislation, including the expulsion of the inhabitants, the closure of their national institutions, the expropriation of Arab and Palestinian land and property and all the other forms of daily harassment of the Palestinian people by the occupation authorities.

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms the importance of the resumption of negotiations on all tracks, including the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, in order to achieve a just, lasting and peaceful settlement based on the Madrid Conference framework, the principle of land for peace, the agreements concluded and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The just and lasting peace sought by the Arab countries is a strategic objective that requires a corresponding commitment from the Israeli Government. That Government should ensure the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon. This would fulfil the aspirations of the countries of the region for stability, peace, and social and economic development.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I wish you every success in your endeavours. I also wish to express our most sincere and profound thanks to Mr. Mahugu, the Ambassador of Kenya, for having guided the Council's work so well last month.

The international community had hardly breathed a sigh of relief after the signing of the Al-Khalil protocol — in spite of the lacunae in that agreement — when the Israeli Government announced plans for a new Israel in Jabal Abu Ghneim in occupied East Jerusalem. These plans are in violation of the signed agreement and represent a consistent wish to impose a policy of *fait accompli*.

The Israeli Government disregards the counsel of all those who have asked it to refrain from taking this ill-conceived measure, showing its inability to gauge the consequences of such an action. International public opinion and the international community promptly denounced this unjust decision and demanded that the Israeli Government refrain from building the settlement and provoking the Palestinians.

Last week, this Council adopted a very clear position. The President of the Council at that time, Ambassador Mahugu, expressed the Council's concern after Israel had announced its intention to take this decision. The Council requested Israel to refrain from any action that might endanger the peace process. It is regrettable that the Council did not receive from the Israeli Government the clarification requested on the steps it intended to take. Its response contained fallacious reasoning, as all observers of the settlement policies implemented by Israel in the occupied Arab territories were aware. These policies were in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, decisions under international law and even the Oslo accords.

It is clear that the building of this new settlement is part of a plan to isolate Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, change the urban environment and the demographic composition of the population and impose a new reality on the ground, which would thwart the desire to see international agreements respected.

The peace process in the Middle East has been based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. The Oslo accords were in keeping with these principles and developed a step-by-step plan for their implementation, a plan aimed at establishing trust between the two parties in order to facilitate the attainment of the objectives. It was agreed that certain important subjects would be deferred until the negotiation of the definitive settlement, given the delicate and sensitive nature of these matters. This in no way authorizes changing the facts on the ground or redefining the situation in order to leave the negotiations devoid of substance and remove their *raison d'être*.

East Jerusalem is an occupied land beyond Israeli sovereignty. The annexation decision taken by Israel has no legal validity, and any measure aimed at prejudging the results of the final negotiations runs counter to the text and the spirit of the peace process and jeopardizes it.

From the very beginning, Tunisia has always worked persistently and with determination to ensure the success of the peace process, because we are firmly convinced that only by peaceful means can the issue of Palestine and the Israeli-Arab conflict be resolved. Tunisia is therefore

deeply concerned and disturbed by certain Israeli practices that utterly contradict the agreements reached. Should they continue, these practices would only push the region back into a cycle of violence and confrontation.

We invite this Council to make it clear to Israel how important it is to pursue the peace process and preserve it from failure. This peace process is an international accomplishment, and no party has the right to manipulate it and jeopardize its foundations.

The question of the city of Jerusalem is a grave one for the Palestinian people, first and foremost, but also for all Muslims, for whom Al-Quds is the first direction of prayer and the third of the Holy Places. Jerusalem/Al-Quds is a highly symbolic place of very special importance from a religious standpoint. Israel constantly attempts to weaken this aspect by insisting on the Judaization of the city and by placing obstacles in the way of its Arab, Muslim and Christian inhabitants in order to encourage them to emigrate.

The building of a settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, which until 1967 was part of the municipality of Bethlehem, is an attempt to cut the links between Christian Palestinians in Al-Quds and in Bethlehem, the cradle of Christianity, and to reduce the Christian presence in the region. At a time when the inhabitants of Al-Quds are being prohibited from rebuilding their homes, when they are fined for doing so, obtaining building permits has been made dependent on their allowing Jewish extremists to lay hands on Arab territories in the city. On the basis of this same strange logic, the Israeli Government is establishing a link between Palestinian acceptance of the decision to build this new settlement and the completion of the withdrawal of its forces from certain areas of the West Bank by virtue of the agreement reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, thus endangering the implementation of contractual obligations.

It is perhaps useful to recall that whenever the world denounced such decisions in the past, Israel hastened to claim that its agreement to the construction of Arab dwellings came in exchange for the building of settlements; this is what Israel announced this time again, in an attempt to mislead the international community. These policies are completely illegal. Moreover these ploys are aimed at justifying the construction of settlements, which usually takes place in the calm that follows the storm and in the end have no effect on the ground.

This Council must take a firm stand regarding this Israeli policy of settlements, which undermines the foundations of the peace process. One either respects the principles of the Madrid Conference and of the Oslo accords or one doesn't. Should the settlement policy in occupied Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem, continue, along with continued violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and lack of respect for commitments, the peace process can only be endangered.

The international community, represented here by this Council, must condemn the construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement and oblige Israel to reverse its decision and adopt a policy that establishes trust, without which no step forward can be taken to find a definitive solution to the issue of Palestine.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker is the representative of Kuwait. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for this month. I am convinced that you shall lead the work of this Council to success. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Kenya, for leading the work of the Council last month. I would like to commend him on the exceptional manner in which he led the work of the Council.

We are meeting here in the Council today to discuss one of the most serious measures adopted by the Israeli Government in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Contrary to measures that we had hoped would bring us closer to peace and stability, we now find ourselves faced with regressive steps that destroy peace and shake confidence rather than consolidate it, dashing our spirits instead of raising them. Measures such as those being adopted by the Israeli Government as part of an ongoing policy are designed to thwart all the efforts now being made for peace. This Government does not realize that, in the final analysis, these policies will lead to confrontation, violence, instability and a resumption of tension, whereas all peoples in the region want to see such tensions disappear. We believe that this cycle of violence will in fact negate the very concept of security as understood by the Israeli Government.

My Government has followed with great concern the latest decision of the Israeli Government to build 6,500 housing units in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Jabal Abu Ghneim. This decision is part and parcel of a series of steps that compel us to call into question the very intentions of Israel with regard to Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The Arab and Muslim world, for its part, has also followed Israel's illegal measures, which include the plan to create a settlement in the Ras al-Amud section within the original borders of the municipality of East Jerusalem; the continued opening of the tunnel under Haram al-Sharif, in spite of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996); the Israeli authorities' ongoing deprival of the Palestinian inhabitants of the city of their right of residence; and the Israeli authorities' isolation of the city of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Kuwait reaffirms here that this Israeli plan violates the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Hague Rules of 1907 and all Security Council resolutions on Al-Quds. This Israeli plan is also a serious violation of the Declaration of Principles signed by the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993.

Today, quite obviously, the Israeli Government would like to impose more *faits accomplis*. It wishes to make these facts reality on the ground in order to drive out the population of the city and to create settlements within and outside the city before negotiating its final status. This only confirms that the Israeli policies are the result not of arbitrary measures or spontaneous decisions, but of a calculated plan to increase the authority of the new Israeli Government and the adoption by that Government of a policy of expansion that violates all conventions and international norms. This policy also represents the culmination of the new strategy of the Israeli Government to abrogate all these agreements, to shirk its commitments and to obviate the principle of land for peace. The policy of expansion at all costs by the Israeli Government threatens to bring the region to the brink of destruction and violence.

The Arab and Muslim world, of course, can only condemn such violations and demands that the Israeli Government put an end to the violation of Arab rights under the pretext of security. We demand that the Israeli Government also try to find ways to support the peace process. We call on it to respect the principles on which the process was based in 1991 in Madrid so that it can resume on all its tracks, especially the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and on the basis of the principle of land for peace. In this way will the Middle East become a region of security and peace for all time.

In conclusion, Kuwait appeals to this body to take a speedy decision to prevent Israel from implementing such a plan. We call upon the Council to shoulder its responsibilities to preserve the sacred nature of Al-Quds and urge it to uphold international legality. This Council cannot disappoint the hopes of peoples for lasting peace simply because some people do not respect international rule of law.

The President: I thank the representative of Kuwait for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. My delegation has full knowledge of your diplomatic skills and leadership qualities and is therefore assured that, with you as President, the work of the Council is indeed in capable hands. May I also take this opportunity to extend our felicitations to your predecessor, Ambassador Njuguna Mahugu of Kenya, for his outstanding leadership and contributions to the work of the Council during the month of February.

My delegation is deeply concerned over Israel's decision on 26 February 1997 to pursue its unlawful policy of establishing settlements in the Holy City of Jerusalem. This decision to build new settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem represents the latest brazen attempt at preempting the outcome of negotiations on final status by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem. Over the years, we have chronicled a series of Israeli policies and practices — most recently, the decision to build another new settlement in the Ras al-Amud region and the opening of the tunnel located within the Haram al-Sharif — all of which are aimed at creating new facts on the ground to the detriment not only of the interests of the Palestinian people, but also of the very peace process itself.

These actions were unacceptable then, are unacceptable now and will be unacceptable in the future. They are in clear violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and incompatible with the Declaration of Principles, subsequent agreements, both in

letter and in spirit, and indeed with generally accepted principles of international law.

This latest negative development is particularly unfortunate against the backdrop of recent signs that the peace process has returned to its proper course despite Israeli procrastination and attempts at reinterpreting agreements already reached. This is fully demonstrated by the agreement reached earlier this year on the complex issue of Israeli withdrawal from Hebron. However, all of this, not least of which is the mutual trust and confidence which have assiduously been built over the past four years, is being placed in jeopardy by Israel.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the arbitrary acts by Israel may provoke a new wave of Palestinian anger and frustration, with unpredictable consequences. Yet we should be clear where the onus of responsibility lies. The Government of Israel cannot shirk its responsibility for the consequences emanating from its ill-conceived policies and practices.

In this regard, the Islamic Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in New York, at its meeting held on 3 March 1997, issued a communiqué in which it calls on the Security Council, *inter alia*, to take urgent steps to ensure that the Government of Israel reverses its decision and renounces any settlement activity in all occupied Arab territories, in particular East Jerusalem. My delegation is therefore hopeful that our deliberations today will lead to the adoption by the Council of concrete measures to reverse these latest Israeli transgressions in the occupied territories, as called for by the Islamic Group and the Group of Arab States.

The peace process in the Middle East has raised hopes for a new era of peace, stability and prosperity for the peoples of the region, including the long-suffering Palestinian people. Indonesia has long stood firm on the principles of respect for the rights of the Palestinians and their claim to sovereignty over their land. The peace agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinians have been the stepping stones to a new level of relations between the peoples of Israel and Palestine. The peace process was to mean that differences could be worked out through negotiations and that the interests and needs of both parties would be respected. Unilateral Israeli actions were to be part of the past and violence would subside. Clearly, however, challenges abound in the realization of such a vision.

Given the provocative measures taken by Israel, my delegation would like to commend the Palestinian Authority for encouraging restraint and opting for peaceful methods to resolve the current crisis. Moderation should be a key word while the parties navigate the difficult waters of establishing peace in the Middle East base on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Actions that could jeopardize this fragile process must be avoided and the endeavours for peace must be made irreversible.

The gains attained thus far in the peace process are indeed of historic significance. It is now up to Israel scrupulously to implement the provisions of the various agreements reached with the Palestinians. The recent agreement on Hebron should be followed by negotiations on other contentious issues, most notably the future status of Jerusalem, the question of settlements, refugees and borders, as well as the final status of the occupied territories.

Through peace, the Middle East has the potential for great transformation, both economically and politically. The peace process and the relevant agreements that have been accepted by both parties must be implemented in their entirety with consistency and fairness, not selectively, sporadically and conditionally.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wehbe (Syria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like at the outset of my statement to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are convinced that your wisdom and experience will contribute to ensuring the success of the Council during this period. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and profound appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Kenya, for his efforts last month.

Given the attempts made in the occupied Arab territories to undermine the foundations of the peace process in the Middle East, the Security Council is meeting under extremely delicate and important circumstances. Israel is once again defying international will by taking the decision to build a new settlement and to continue its settlement activities in the region of Jabal Abu Ghneim in the southern part of East Jerusalem.

It is no longer possible to remain silent in the face of all these injustices inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian people, particularly in the face of the serious and continued attempts to change the urban and demographic character of the City of Al-Quds, a historic and holy city and symbol. This is being done in order to enshrine the occupation of Al-Quds, judaize the Holy City and drive out the Arabs still living there.

All this constitutes a clear and flagrant violation of the principles and basis of the peace process and of the decisions of the international community — particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 338 (1973) and 465 (1980) — that affirm the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. These decisions deem all measures and actions, including the expropriation of land and property, to be null and void and without effect on the status of occupied Jerusalem.

The Netanyahu Government planned this new provocation very well within the framework of his aggressive colonization and ongoing campaign to Judaize Al-Quds. Indeed, it has already built the first Jewish neighbourhood in the Al-Quds neighbourhood of Ras al-Amud. It is clear that this recent decision of the Israeli Government is aimed at creating an explosive situation, as was the opening of the tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque. At that time, the Security Council adopted resolution 1073 (1996) of 28 September 1996. In that resolution, the Council called for:

> "the immediate cessation and reversal of all acts which have resulted in the aggravation of the situation, and which have negative implications for the Middle East peace process". (*res. 1073 (1996), para. 1*)

It is regrettable that Israel has not respected that resolution — just as it has not respected other internationally binding resolutions. Israel's feverish settlement activities may be seen in the framework of its aggressive behaviour, which is provocative and defies the binding decisions of the international community; the international community must firmly denounce and condemn that behaviour. The representatives who spoke here yesterday expressed that position exactly.

As early as 1 December 1996, the Council of the League of Arab States condemned the settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories and the attitude of the Israeli Government, which persisted in its expansion of the settlements in violation of international law and internationally binding decisions, in particular Security Council resolution 465 (1980). That resolution determined that the settlements were an obstruction to achieving peace, and called upon Israel to dismantle them. Resolution 497 (1981) declared null and void the Israeli decision to annex the occupied Golan; this was adopted following the Israeli Government's decision to expand its settlements in the occupied territories, in particular in the West Bank, the Arab part of Jerusalem, in Gaza and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Likewise, the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, meeting at Jakarta on 14 December 1996, called upon the international community, the Security Council, the sponsors of the peace process and the European Union to persuade Israel to abandon its settlement policies in the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds and the occupied Syrian Golan — which, it was stressed, are part of the occupied Arab territories. The Israeli authorities were called upon to end their settlement policies aimed at changing the demographic nature of Al-Quds, desecrating its Muslim and Christian holy places with a view to judaizing it, sealing it off and isolating it from the rest of the West Bank.

International reaction to these latest Israeli Government measures to intensify the settlement policies has focused on the following points: First, settlement activities undermine the peace process. Second, the Israeli decision raises doubts and does not inspire trust. Third, it could mark a return to violence and tension in the Middle East. Fourth, it constitutes a declaration of war against the Arab, Muslim and Christian worlds, against the peace process, and against efforts to revive that process. Fifth, the settlement policies foreshadow a new catastrophe in the region. Sixth, the international community is urged firmly to condemn past, present and future settlement policies. Seventh, the question of Al-Quds is extremely sensitive, and could become explosive.

Some condemnations of the settlement policy have been moderate. There have been appeals for an urgent meeting of the Al-Quds Committee presided over by His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco, for an Arab summit, and for meetings of the Security Council. Yesterday and today in this Chamber, we all listened most attentively to the reactions of the representatives of many countries. They all called for prudence in the light of possible reactions to the Israeli decision.

With great arrogance, the Israeli Government has asked Arab leaders to shoulder their responsibilities and

demonstrate political wisdom — at a time when the Israeli Government is doing its best to destroy the peace process, with no regard for a just and comprehensive peace, while seeming determined to strike blow after blow against the peace process, thus to kill that process. We wonder, therefore, whether it is political wisdom to continue building settlements in the Holy City in the face of condemnation from the entire international community. Is it political wisdom for the Israeli authorities to harden their policies and attempt to return the peace process to square one? It seems to me that Israel simply wants the Arabs to yield, in order to demonstrate what it would call political wisdom.

True political wisdom dictates that the Arabs view the peace process as a strategic policy that must exist within a framework of international legality; this requires a serious commitment by Israel to continue the peace process and to restore rights in the occupied territories, in order to guarantee a balanced peace for all the countries of the region. This cannot take place if Israel continues to build settlements and undermine the whole peace process.

In the light of all these facts, and of the fact that Israel arrogantly continues its settlements and expansion despite the Arab choice of peace as its strategic option, we are obliged to ask a number of very important questions, relating not only to the seriousness of the Israeli Government, which is not respecting the peace process, but also to the Israeli intention to undermine that process.

We would recall that the leaders meeting at the Arab Summit held at Cairo from 21 to 23 June 1996 reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations resolutions requiring non-recognition and non-acceptance of any situation resulting from Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories, inasmuch as such activities are unlawful and create no rights and no obligations. They considered that the establishment of settlements and the introduction of settlers violate the Geneva Conventions and the Madrid framework and represent an impediment to the peace process. There should thus be a halt to all Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Palestinian territories, especially Jerusalem, and the settlements should be removed. The leaders affirmed their rejection of any alteration to the physical characteristics or legal status of Arab Jerusalem.

We cannot remain silent about the settlement policy, because that policy could return the region to the cycle of violence and tension; this would be the sole responsibility of the Israeli Government.

Israel's arrogance stands in complete disregard of internationally binding decisions and of the position of the international community against the building of settlements. We have seen many Israeli statements, including Mr. Netanyahu's recent insistence that Jerusalem was the eternal, indivisible capital of Israel. In the face of this assault and in the face of the recent statement by the Israeli Minister of the Interior, as quoted in *The Washington Post* on 25 February, that the "battle of Jerusalem had begun", the Security Council, which bears responsibility for the maintenance of international peace, must succeed in seeing through all this and issue a presidential statement. It must take action commensurate with the need to put an end to the occupation of all the occupied territories, including Al-Quds and the occupied Syrian Golan.

Yesterday, the representatives of the United Kingdom and of many other countries addressed the Security Council; we are grateful to them for their statements. We also heard the representative of Israel, who tried to give us a history lesson. We are not here for history lessons.

I believe that statements by representatives of States in the Security Council and in the General Assembly are in themselves a response to the historical, political and geographic situation of the city of Jerusalem. On this basis, my country strongly condemns all these measures, such as Israel's settlement activities, be they the building of new settlements or the expansion of existing ones.

My country considers that all these measures are in violation of the principles of the peace process. The Israeli decisions that constitute provocation violate international law and internationally binding decisions and resolutions, and they undermine the foundations of the peace process. This can only undo the efforts that have been undertaken over the past five years, plunging the region back into a cycle of instability and conflict.

It is for this reason that we invite the Council and all the States of the world, and in particular the two sponsor States of the peace process and the European Union, to work speedily in order to put an end to the expansion of Israeli settlements; to dismantle existing settlements and to put pressure on Israel, the occupying Power, to respect the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 — which prohibit any change in the demographic or urban character of the occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan — and to invite Israel to respect the resolutions of

the Security Council and of other organs of the United Nations.

We also invite the two sponsors of the peace process — the United States and the Russian Federation — as well as the States of the European Union to play their role in order to save the peace process, which is at an impasse and could even be in a state of regression.

Syria is fully prepared to conclude a just and comprehensive peace. We believe this to be a strategic choice as long as Israel participates seriously in the achievement of that goal in a way that ensures justice and human dignity, because this is in the interest of the peoples of the region. These are vital interests for the region and for the world.

If Israel is truly serious, if it wants to pursue the peace process, if it wants to achieve a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of Madrid, the principle of land for peace and Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and other resolutions, then Israel must continue negotiations from the point where they were interrupted during the tenure of the preceding Israeli Government. It must also withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967, without any attempt to impose preconditions, because these are the underpinnings and the frames of reference of the peace process — not preconditions.

The road to peace is open, and it is known to all. The security of States cannot be based on occupation, on expansion and on the refusal to recognize the rights of others. All those who are trying to convince the world that peace exists in the region are only lying to themselves, because a just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved except through Israel's total withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, through the respect for international legality and the principles of international law, and by restoring to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination. This is what the countries of the region and the countries of the world at large want. This is how we will be able to achieve a just and comprehensive peace. This is how peace and stability will be brought to the region and to the world.

Israel cannot build settlements and drive out the Arab peoples; it can bring in Jewish settlers who have never before lived in that region and whose ancestors have never lived in that region. Israel can continue to expand. It can continue to demolish houses and to kill people in the occupied Arab territories, but everyone must be aware that Israel will not be able to stifle the Arab will. Israel's only choice, therefore, is to work towards a genuine, just and comprehensive peace.

Today, the eyes of the world are on the Council. We are waiting for the Council to shoulder its responsibilities and adopt a resolution that demands that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately put an end to its settlement activities in all the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Ahmed (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for this month, and I wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. I should like also to thank your predecessor for his outstanding performance as President of the Security Council during the past month.

Holy Jerusalem is the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the most pivotal issue for the Arab Muslim world. The way in which this issue will be resolved will decide the future of the peace process as a whole. We are concerned to see the Israeli authorities continuing to commit certain acts that are intended to change the Holy City's demographic and institutional character in order to Judaize Arab Jerusalem and alter its legal, historical, religious and cultural reality. This is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1907. It will also prejudge the negotiations on the final status of that city.

The Holy City of Jerusalem is of the utmost importance to the Arab and Muslim worlds, to the world community as a whole and to the three monotheistic religions. That is why the illegal Israeli policies and practices in Jerusalem are of an extreme gravity.

The announcement by the Israeli Government that it intends to build a new settlement comprising 6,500 housing units in East Jerusalem, in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim, is but the latest in a series of policies and acts aimed at expanding the settlements, notwithstanding the fact that the international community and the Security Council have issued clear resolutions declaring such

policies illegal, null and void. In addition, the international community has demanded that Israel desist from such policies and practices. Despite all these clear signals, the Israeli authorities continue their dangerous practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, disregarding every convention and recognizing no right, as if no deterrent could bring them back to legal norms.

Some of the most continually destabilizing factors in the occupied territories are the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza strip and their constant expansion. One can only imagine how dangerous this would be within Holy Jerusalem. The city is the first *kiblah* and the third-holiest place for Muslims, and the center of Muslims' attention. They will not be satisfied until all their rights are restored to them in this Holy City. The announcement by the Israeli Government that it intends to build a new settlement in East Jerusalem despite all Arab, Islamic and international warnings constitutes a new challenge to the international community and threatens the return of tension to the region, where violence and instability will prevail once again.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that no lasting peace will be achieved in the Middle East without a just solution to the issue of Holy Jerusalem in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which demand Israel's withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967, and resolution 252 (1968), which deals with Jerusalem. Accordingly, the future of the Middle East and peace in that region are in the hands of the international community. Unless the international community moves to save this peace by demanding that Israel cease its settlement practices and policies in the city of Jerusalem, the peace process in the Middle East and the integrity of the agreements already signed between parties to the conflict will be seriously threatened.

The Government of the custodian of the two holy mosques considers that the decision of the current Israeli Government to build new settlements in Holy Jerusalem is illegal and constitutes a dangerous violation of international conventions and agreements. This decision reaffirms the continuation of the Israeli Government's plans to Judaize the city of Jerusalem and efface its Arab and Islamic character. Saudi Arabia also believes that such policies and practices contribute to increasing tension; in addition, the Israeli Government loses its credibility in the context of the peace process and thus threatens to destroy that process.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the custodian of the two holy mosques, rejects the continual Israeli attempts to build new settlements. We also emphasize the extreme gravity of this decision and ask the Security Council to make every necessary effort to ensure that Israel, as the occupying Power, will desist from these policies and practices, and in particular will completely stop any settlement activity in Arab Jerusalem. Failure to achieve this will push the region back into a spiral of conflict, tension and instability.

We hope that the Security Council will discharge its responsibilities in connection with events in Holy Jerusalem to prove to the whole world that it is on the side of righteousness and legitimacy.

The President: I thank the representative of Saudi Arabia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure of extending to you, Sir, my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am deeply convinced that your wisdom, long experience and knowledge of world affairs will lead the Council to success. I would also like to extend my congratulations to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, Ambassador Mahugu, for all his efforts in leading the Council last month.

I also take pleasure in thanking you for convening this meeting on an urgent basis, at the request of the Arab Group, in order to discuss a very important issue. In acceding so quickly to that request, the Council has shown that it sees the danger posed by any impasse in the peace process, while also showing its concern for shouldering its responsibility with regard to this issue.

The Israeli Government has taken the decision to create a new settlement in the southern part of East Jerusalem, in Jabal Abu Ghneim, on the road to Bethlehem in Arab territory. Israel should have returned this land to the Arab Palestinian population as part of the peace process and on the basis of one of the essential tenets and foundations of the peace process: the exchange of occupied Arab land for peace.

Jordan has already expressed its firm opposition to the Israeli decision because it believes that the Arab city of Jerusalem is territory that has been occupied since

1967, like the rest of the West Bank. This Israeli decision poses a great danger and is fraught with consequences. This step runs counter to all the foundations of the peace process; to the Madrid principle of land for peace; to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which affirms that the acquisition of territories by force is illegal; to resolutions 338 (1973) and 242 (1967), which are the reference points for the peace process; and to international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Rules of 1907 and their annexes. This decision constitutes a violation of the right to private property, and an attempt to expropriate territories and force out the population. It also goes against all the resolutions adopted by this Council. Israel has always refused to renounce its settlement activities.

There have been some positive achievements since the Madrid Peace Conference. The Arab side has shown that it can be committed to peace, that it can work seriously and sincerely for achieving peace. As part of this process, Jordan, for its part, signed in autumn 1994 a full peace treaty with Israel. Jordan has complied with all the modalities and commitments of that treaty. Jordan continues to comply with all the requirements of the peace process. The Palestinians and Israelis, for their part, have concluded the Oslo agreements and other important agreements, each of which is a step towards the goal of a final agreement and comprehensive peace for both parties. The latest agreement is on the partial withdrawal from Al-Khalil.

There can be no doubt that the Palestinian side has honoured all its agreements, especially with regard to the suppression of all violent demonstrations and in connection with serious security assurances in all areas under the control of the Palestinian National Authority, with strict respect for the most important Israeli requests. Furthermore, a number of Arab States from outside the region, stirred by their desire to support peace and to see it restored in lasting form, have established relations with Israel and have tried every possible means of dealing with Israel and cooperating with it.

We hope that all these achievements will lead to additional achievements, and will culminate in the restoration of the comprehensive and lasting peace we all desire. We hope that this will put the region on the path towards economic reconstruction and development and scientific and technological progress, which will make peace meaningful and help remedy the effects of decades of conflict and bloodshed in the region.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Tensions have worsened. Today we see that, after thinking that the peace process would move forward, the fear has now arisen that the peace process will move backwards. This is evidenced by the fact that some States have stopped actions intended to normalize relations with Israel.

We are deeply concerned to see the peace process take a turn for the worse in the area because of Israel's non-compliance with the principles of peace. The problem we are addressing today in the Council is not Israel's first violation. Israel has persisted in its settlement activities in occupied Arab territories and has not fulfilled its commitments. Indeed, the Council was compelled to meet last September when Israel opened a tunnel beneath a mosque, prompting an outbreak of violence and violating the rights of Palestinians and the feelings of the Arab and Muslim world. We also saw the delays in implementation of the Al-Khalil protocol, despite the conclusion of this agreement by the previous Israeli Government.

The continuation of these measures, the ongoing expulsions and demolition of homes, the issuance of identity cards to the inhabitants of Al-Quds and their lack of access to holy sites in the city and the isolation of territories are all practices that created the atmosphere that prevailed in the region a few years ago and which we believed was a thing of the past.

The persistence with which Israel continues to occupy lands and create settlements clearly demonstrates that Israel is not committed to shouldering its responsibilities and complying with its commitment to return occupied lands to their rightful owners in exchange for peace. How, then, can we hope that peace might be achieved? The only way to establish peace is to comply with all the agreements concluded. We cannot contemplate peace without a return of land in accordance with the peace process. It is because we believe in peace and that peace is a necessity for all peoples and States in the region — and first and foremost for Israel — that we urge this Council to assume its responsibilities and speedily to adopt a firm resolution that will declare null and void the steps Israel has taken while demanding that Israel rescind its decision, cease any settlement activities and remove any obstacles that might hinder steps towards peace.

We also call upon the international community, and those responsible for the peace process in particular, to oppose these settlement activities by compelling Israel to rescind its decisions and to pursue the path of peace.

We consider the commitment to peace and to complying with all of its requirements to be our only choice. We will never flinch in the face of this commitment and shall always devote ourselves to this goal. We know the consequences for the region should peace fail to materialize, but peace cannot be achieved on a unilateral basis; it can be consolidated only if all parties to the process choose peace and if this process is based on justice and mutual recognition of legitimate rights and requirements.

The President: I thank the representative of Jordan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Bangladesh. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. Allow me also to pay a warm tribute to Ambassador Mahugu of Kenya for his wise and skilful guidance of the proceedings of the Council in February.

A series of intense negotiations and considerable sacrifices have shaped the momentum of the Middle East peace process, which began in Madrid in 1991 and was formalized in the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements. Despite often deep frustrations, the international community hoped that Israel would honour its commitment to the peace package in all its aspects. Unfortunately, Israel has often faltered, under various excuses and pretexts, in fulfilling its obligations. Nonetheless, with the recent signing of the Hebron protocol, the prospects for a continued partnership in peace between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government grew brighter. The basis for final status negotiations on Jerusalem and other remaining issues was laid out in a workable framework. It was in this context that Bangladesh welcomed the signing of the Hebron protocol and expressed the hope that all parties would work towards the creation and nourishment of a climate for achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. At the same time, we reiterated that the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab and Palestinian lands was an essential prerequisite for this goal.

We were jolted by the recent decision of the Israeli Government to build new settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. Clearly, this move not only violates the spirit and terms of the agreements to which the Israeli Government is a party, but also raises serious doubt about the sincerity of the Israeli Government towards the entire peace process. Israel is now trying to preempt the outcome of the negotiations on the final status by changing the legal and demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem. But we want to remind Israel that Jerusalem is not only a city as close to the hearts of the Palestinians as to the Israelis themselves; it is a place of crucial importance to the entire Muslim world, in particular, and to the international community in general.

Jerusalem constitutes the critical test of Israeli's sincerity and commitment to the peace process. It is a commitment Israel has made so many times to the international community. No mistake should be made that the Israeli move on Jerusalem stands in clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions. Israel must not underestimate the devastating backlash which this hasty and provocative decision on East Jerusalem might unleash. This could throw the entire region back into a spiral of uncertainty and chaos. The international community is not ready to tolerate any situation that has been created deliberately to satisfy the objectives of domestic political aspirations in Israel.

Bangladesh therefore expresses its deep concern and deplores the illegal and provocative measures initiated by Israel, which may jeopardize whatever progress has been achieved in the ongoing peace process in the Middle East. Bearing in mind the special responsibility of the Security Council in respect of the overall peace process in the Middle East, it is our earnest hope that the Security Council will take urgent steps to ensure that the Israeli Government reverses its decision to build settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim and desists from any settlement activity in the occupied territories in future.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to pay tribute to the Permanent Representative of Kenya for his excellent work during his presidency last month.

Today's meeting of the Security Council has been called to consider yet another instance of the old

ambitious and expansionist policy of the Israeli regime in the sensitive region of the Middle East. The notorious policy of building settlements in the occupied territories has been part of the grand design of the occupiers to change the basic characteristics of the Palestinian territories in order to perpetuate their occupation. This policy is being pursued in blatant contravention of international law and in open defiance of clear provisions of numerous United Nations resolutions, including those adopted by the Council itself.

Under the circumstances prevailing in the aftermath of the cold war, it is indeed very difficult to conceive that the violation of the most fundamental principles of international law could be perpetrated with such a sense of impunity. The only explanation seems to lie in the fact that Israel has realized that the Security Council is not prepared to live up to its commitments to stop aggression, thanks to the unqualified and continuous support of certain members who, at most and out of sheer embarrassment, express dissatisfaction with the atrocious Israeli practices in the occupied areas. Had the Council adopted concrete measures in the past to discharge its obligations effectively in the face of persistent Israeli intransigence, we would not have faced the present calamity.

The recent decision of Israel to build 6,500 housing units in Jerusalem is also designed to change the Islamic character of the city in the continuous process of judaization of Jerusalem, which is sacred to all Muslims. As the first *kiblah* of Muslims, Al-Quds Al-Sharif has a special place in the heart of every Muslim. Therefore, to presume that the illegal continuation of occupation, the imposition of demographic changes in Jerusalem as well as the daily harassment of the Muslim inhabitants of the city would erode the love and devotion of every Muslim to this Holy City is pure delusion and, as such, out of touch with reality and, in the final analysis, utterly impracticable.

History attests to the fact that Muslims have always comprised the majority of inhabitants in Jerusalem and any claim to the contrary is not only a mere fabrication of historical facts but an insult to human conscience. All of the Islamic countries are united on this position and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which owes its *raison d'être* to the Muslims' response to an act of arson against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, has always condemned the Israeli practices in Palestine and called for the liberation of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The Security Council has the legal and moral responsibility to speak out against the violation of international law by the Zionist regime. The urgency of forceful action by the Security Council becomes all the more imperative in the light of the fact that the leaders of Israel are intent on building these new illegal settlements despite the outrage of the local inhabitants and condemnation from all over the world. Bearing in mind that Israel is creating a *fait accompli* throughout Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem, the Security Council should condemn in the strongest possible terms the decision of Israel to build new settlements in Jerusalem. It should also take the necessary measures in accordance with the Charter to reverse this decision. Only through the adoption of decisive and effective measures can the Security Council enhance its credibility. The Security Council is called to act at a time when the memories of the second Persian Gulf war and the way the Council handled that conflict are still alive. Therefore, in order not to be accused of further resort to double standards, the Security Council should act expeditiously and vigorously. The Israeli regime, shamelessly flouting international norms and principles and even its own commitments undertaken in bilateral agreements, deserves no leniency whatsoever.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Afghanistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) (*interpretation from French*): In congratulating you most sincerely on your assumption of the presidency of the Council, Sir, I would also like to say that we know you personally and your ability successfully to guide the work of the Security Council in such an important and emotional debate as that under way. I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Mahugu of Kenya, the President for the month of February, who led the work of the Council with skill.

There is great concern throughout the world over the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, is initiating a new phase in its construction of settlements in the occupied territories. These steps are unlawful both in the south-eastern suburbs of the Holy City, adjacent to Arab Jerusalem — a territory occupied following a war — as well as in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan. Furthermore, these practices, as has been thoroughly explained here since yesterday, are doing great harm to the peace process. These are violations of article 49 of the Fourth

Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and to the many resolutions adopted by the Security Council that have been referred to by delegations that have spoken before me.

Yesterday afternoon, the representative of Israel concluded his statement by quoting the Bible. He gave us a rather brief summary of five paragraphs at the beginning of Chapter 8 of the Book of Zechariah.

The Lord does indeed talk about old men and women and small boys and girls living in Jerusalem. But at the end of that same chapter 8, verse 23 talks about people speaking different languages and belonging to different nations coming to Jerusalem to worship God. We must above all cite the words of the Lord in verse 17 of the same chapter of the book of Zechariah, which is the confirmation of a commandment:

> "And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour". *(The Holy Bible, Zechariah 8:17)*

The Koran, Holy Book and divine word for more than a billion Muslims, respects Jerusalem. In sura XVII, entitled "Children of Israel", verse 1, Al-Quds is the Holy City of three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to verses 77 and 78 of sura XXII of the Koran, Abraham was not the spiritual ancestor of a nation, but of all believers, as God tells all the believers of all centuries and of all nations, "Abraham is your ancestor". The use of the word ancestor is therefore quite spiritual and goes far beyond the physical sense.

The question of Al-Quds Al-Sharif obviously concerns Palestinians, the great majority of whom are Muslims, though some are also Christians. The question concerns Arabs because Palestinians are Arabs. The Security Council has before it document S/1997/157, which contains a communiqué issued by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States.

However, the question is also Islamic. The Council has before it document S/1997/182, which contains a letter from the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, who is the Chairman of the Islamic Group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

More than a quarter of a century ago, in 1969, following an act of arson that took place in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first summit of Islamic countries was held in Rabat, Morocco. I was present there as a member of the Afghan delegation, and I saw the intense devotion of the representatives of Islamic countries throughout the world to the question of Al-Quds. It is therefore the Islamic people of the world who, considering Al-Quds an Islamic city, are concerned today, and they number over a billion.

Christians throughout the world are also deeply concerned. The Muslims of the world also respect the holy places of Jews and Christians.

These facts are well known throughout the world. The problem under discussion is not at all local, but is important for a broad sector of humanity. Spiritual and religious rights are the most fundamental of human rights, even if they have been passed over in silence in the statements, conventions and other legal instruments internationally issued or adopted in the past half century.

About two years ago the Security Council debated this same subject. We have already recalled that resolution 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980 stated, over 17 years ago, that such measures taken by Israel led to a change in the physical character, demographic nature and institutional structures in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem. These measures therefore have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstacle to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

It is certain, as the experience of peoples has shown, that anyone who creates mistrust by building in the occupied territories is not building confidence, and that anyone who exploits its power as an occupier and tries to draw advantage from it jeopardizes the precarious stability of the peace process. At the same time, it moves towards the point of no return on the path of conflict and condemns its army to being for ever an army of intervention.

Anyone who confiscates the territories of the citizens of an occupied territory only stokes the victims' resolve to resist. Anyone who builds settlements in occupied territories is destroying at the same time any chance of reaching a period of lasting settlement, peace and tranquillity. Anyone who thinks of extending settlements in the occupied territories is further aggravating the situation for years to come. Anyone who insists on committing a series of actions that cause widespread upheaval and poison the atmosphere of the peace process is only choosing a policy of long-term confrontation.

The vital duty of the Security Council is to strengthen the foundations of the peace process. This duty is becoming very urgent at a time when the derailment of the peace process can be seen coming from miles away. The Council's action would not be valid if it were to end this debate in silence. There is immense and almost total agreement around this table. Delegations agree on almost all points. This enables the Council to take a stand while at the same time reconfirming its previous resolutions. Such an action would be useful for future efforts to renew the atmosphere of hope for peace, which is so important for the peoples of the Middle East.

In conclusion, the world impatiently awaits, at the end of this meeting, a firm and unequivocal resolution from the Council denouncing any action taken by the occupying Power that creates mistrust and confrontation, and clearly denouncing anything that creates an obstacle to the peace process or that might destroy the chances of viable coexistence between neighbouring peoples in the Holy Land. This would be the denunciation of an action that has already been condemned on many occasions, and the affirmation of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of land by force.

The President: I thank the representative of Afghanistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. I wish also to commend your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for his able stewardship last month.

The convening of this meeting is most timely in the wake of the decision of the Israeli Government to press ahead with its policy of expanding Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. The decision to build yet another new illegal Jewish settlement, in Jabal Abu Ghneim, is a highly provocative — indeed, a highly irresponsible — act which could have serious negative repercussions on the current Arab-Israeli peace process.

Malaysia has followed the peace process with cautious optimism and was encouraged by the progress that had been made recently with the signing of the Hebron protocol. The signing of the protocol, which has led to the redeployment of Israeli forces from most parts of Hebron, has been widely regarded as a positive step towards the full realization of the long-awaited comprehensive and just settlement in the region based on relevant Security Council resolutions. It was the hope of the international community that the parties concerned would honour their commitments, show good faith and refrain from taking any measure which could undermine the process which had been so assiduously put together.

Regrettably, instead of building confidence and understanding, the Israeli Government has chosen to build new settlements in defiance of the Palestinian sentiments which have been clearly expressed on this issue. This controversial decision cannot but be seen as a brazenly provocative act. It is a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is a blatant contravention of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the ones adopted during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. It is also a departure from the principle of land for peace as agreed to by the parties involved in the peace process, including Israel. Instead of strengthening the peace process and taking it forward, the Israeli decision can only undermine it and take it backward.

This is not the first time that the Israeli Government has resorted to such actions and tactics in pursuance of its own narrow political and strategic objectives. My delegation strongly condemns this latest Israeli measure and calls on the Israeli Government to rescind its decision and to desist in the future from taking any such unilateral actions which could undermine the still fragile peace process. My delegation would therefore urge the Council to pronounce itself in clear and unambiguous language on this important issue and to denounce the Israeli decision forcefully through a strongly worded resolution. Anything less than this would send the wrong message to the Israeli Government, which would be unfortunate indeed. In the view of my delegation, a strong resolution from the Council would not amount to interfering in the peace process; rather it would help ensure that the process is not derailed as a result of the irresponsible act of one of the parties.

My delegation cannot accept the policies and illegal measures taken by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem aimed at judaizing the city and changing its legal status and demographic composition to advance Israel's own political agenda. Jerusalem is of great spiritual importance not only to the Jews but also to the entire Islamic community throughout the world, and to Christians everywhere.

Clearly, by embarking on the expansion of Jewish settlements on Arab lands, the Israeli Government is pursuing a well calculated political outcome, oblivious to the views, sentiments and aspirations of the other, equally important, party to the negotiations, the Palestinians. By relentlessly pursuing its settlements policy, Israel intends to create a fait accompli and in doing so shows its arrogant take-it-or-leave-it attitude towards the peace process. The recent statement of Prime Minister Netanyahu reiterating Israel's absolute sovereignty over all of Jerusalem as the "eternal capital of the Jewish people which will never again be divided" typifies the uncompromising and brazen attitude of the present Israeli leadership, not the statesmanship that would have been more appropriate, and that is expected of it in the current delicate situation. This is a transparent and unambiguous attempt by Israel to preempt the outcome of the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem by changing the legal status and demographic characteristics of that city. Clearly, this is against the letter and the spirit of the peace accords concluded between the two sides. Peace-building is an enterprise based on mutual trust, cooperation and partnership between the parties concerned. A partnership is not healthy and will not endure if one of the parties acts irresponsibly and tramples underfoot those things that are held dear by the other party. Unilateral acts of the kind pursued by Israel will not promote or sustain the peace process. Indeed, they raise questions about Israel's real commitment to peace.

In the face of this latest provocation by Israel, the Palestinian Authority should be commended for its exercise of self-restraint in avoiding untoward incidents, which could have easily broken out, and which still could. The Council should encourage this great exercise of self-restraint on the part of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people by coming out with a clear resolution condemning, not condoning, the decision of the Israeli Government. At the same time, my delegation would urge the influential countries that brokered the peace agreement to exert every effort to ensure that the peace process stays on course.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Bahrain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes at the outset to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that your experience and skill will guarantee the success of the Council's work. My delegation must also thank His Excellency the Permanent Representative of Kenya for his exemplary work in guiding the work of the Council last month.

It was with grave concern that my country noted the decision of the Israeli authorities to build a 6,500-unit settlement in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of south-east Al-Quds, with the objective of completing the ring of settlements encircling Arab Jerusalem.

The fact that Israel has taken a step of this nature is but a continuation of the illegal policies it pursues in the occupied Arab territories. These policies are in violation of all internationally binding resolutions and conventions pertaining to the demand that no settlements be constructed in these territories and that Israel should respect the legal status and the demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem.

It is noteworthy in this regard to recall the Hague Convention of 1907 and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as the General Assembly resolutions that are relevant to the question of the Middle East and of Palestine. The fact that Israel has insisted on keeping the tunnel in Al-Haram Al-Sharif open is yet another clear example of its disregard for Security Council resolution 1073 (1996).

The city of Jerusalem has a very special character that distinguishes it from all other places in the world: its spiritual importance for all divinely revealed religions. The policy pursued by the Government of Tel-Aviv in altering the character of the city and its legal status is proof of the total disregard of the occupying Israeli authorities for the feelings of those who live in the city. With this policy, these authorities are attempting to complicate the legal status of the city in order to impose a *fait accompli* that would benefit them in the final-status negotiations on the city. One of the means of imposing such a *fait accompli* is through the establishment and expansion of settlements.

My delegation believes that any attempt by Israel to provide pretexts that would justify its measures will not affect the will of the international community nor its demand that Israel reverse these measures, which contravene the rules of international law and violate the relevant international resolutions. These resolutions explicitly proscribe the construction of settlements,

because this constitutes an alteration to the character of the city.

The other important consideration is the fact that these settlements are built on expropriated Palestinian lands. The pretext put forward by the Government of Tel-Aviv that such measures do not fall geographically within the city of Jerusalem is hardly convincing, because it is incompatible with the tangible geographical facts. To say that the Arabs in the area in which Israeli settlements are to be built will benefit as well is an unacceptable justification. A benefit cannot flow from an unjust and erroneous measure.

It is high time for Israel to honour its obligations under internationally binding instruments and under the relevant United Nations resolutions. Its Government must deal wisely and with clearsightedness with matters pertaining to the occupied Arab territories.

The Security Council must take a clear stance on the question of the continued establishment by Israel of settlements in the occupied Arab territories in general and in the city of Jerusalem in particular. The Council should demand that Israel reverse its recent decision to construct more settlements, in view of the fact that the establishment of such settlements is a threat to international peace and security because it hinders the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We call upon the sponsors of the peace process to act so as to bring Israel to put an end to its settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories in general and Jerusalem in particular. Needless to say, the establishment of settlements directly and adversely affects the peace process in the Middle East. At a time when the Palestinian National Authority is called upon to show restraint and to stop all acts of violence in order to safeguard the peace process, the entire world is shocked by Israel's intention to build new settlements in the Holy City, thus provoking negative feelings and causing violence.

The negotiations continue to be frozen on both the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks with the continued occupation by Israel of the Lebanese and Syrian Arab lands. In view of the continuation of this unnatural situation, it is inexplicable that the Palestinian side should be called upon to show restraint while the Israeli side continues its provocations, which do not at all encourage such restraint. Furthermore, this is setting back peaceful negotiations, if not bringing them to a complete standstill.

All these considerations make it necessary to call upon Israel to rescind its decision to establish a settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim and to desist from building further settlements, if the peace process is to regain its vitality. The Security Council bears a special responsibility in all this because it is the source of the internationally binding resolutions that have formed the basis for the peace talks, starting with the Madrid Conference and ending with the redeployment in Hebron and all actions that remain to be taken, foremost among which are the negotiations on the status of the city of Jerusalem — the city that is the focus of today's attempts to stop the construction of any further Israeli settlements.

The President: I thank the representative of Bahrain for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I am confident that under your talented and able guidance, the Council will be able successfully to fulfil its responsibilities during the current month. I should like also to take this opportunity to express my admiration for your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council.

It is with a sense of utmost concern that the Government of Pakistan views the recent decision by Israel to build a new settlement consisting of 600 housing units in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area of East Jerusalem. Israel has also kept open the tunnel extending under the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa mosque, Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We were equally disturbed to learn that Israel has continued to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank by declaring it off-limits to Palestinians and withdrawing residence permits for the city's original Arab inhabitants. Pakistan strongly condemns all these actions, which constitute a blatant violation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, the Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements.

The special significance of the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for the international community in general and the Islamic Ummah in particular requires no elaboration. Israeli measures that are aimed at altering the legal status

and demographic composition of Jerusalem are illegal and invalid.

Israeli acts of provocation have once again shattered hopes that the peace process would lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. This would require the complete withdrawal by the Israeli authorities from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Pakistan's support for the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is well known. We have consistently stated that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) continue to provide a viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

It is imperative that the peace process, arrived at through bold and courageous initiatives, not collapse. We fully share the expectations of the international community that there will be no attempt to derail the implementation of the agreements and accords concluded so far. The provisions of these agreements and accords must be sincerely complied with in both letter and spirit. We hope that the Israeli leadership will concede the realities on the ground and resolve all pending issues — including the immediate reversal of their alarming actions — with the Palestinian National Authority. We strongly urge the demonstration of the requisite flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will ensure security and stability for all in the Middle East.

The Government and the people of Pakistan are deeply concerned at these latest actions by the Israeli authorities, which are seriously undermining the peace process. Pakistan urges the Security Council to uphold the just position taken by the Palestinians on the issue of Jerusalem, a position which is based on international law and justice. We also call upon the Council not only to take urgent measures to redress the current grave situation; which imperils the peace of the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, but to prevent the further deterioration of the situation. We firmly believe that the Council has the duty to call upon the Israeli authorities immediately to end these unjust actions and to desist from taking similar actions in the future.

We are confident that the Security Council is conscious of the importance that is attached to Al-Quds Al-Sharif by the entire Muslim world and to the dangers inherent in allowing the prevailing resentment to fester.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries — Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — have aligned themselves with this statement. Liechtenstein has also aligned itself with it.

The European Union believes that there is no alternative to the peace process. The past year has witnessed many difficult moments in the implementation of the peace process, but also some positive developments. The European Union was pleased when, in January last, after long and arduous negotiations, an agreement was reached on the redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron. The European Union hoped that the Hebron protocol marked one more important step on the road towards a just and stable peace in the Middle East and could provide the necessary momentum to reinvigorate the peace process. The European Union expressed the hope that the Hebron protocol would strengthen the atmosphere of mutual confidence, which is indispensable for the further implementation of the Oslo agreements.

The European Union remains deeply committed to the peace process. Peace in the Middle East is a fundamental interest of the Union. With a view to promoting and assisting the search for peace, the European Union has appointed Ambassador Moratinos as its special envoy to the peace process. Frequent visits by representatives of the European Union to the Middle East are a further indication of our interest in securing a peaceful settlement. The negotiations on Hebron were laborious, but their success offered hope for a renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian partnership for peace.

The European Union deeply deplores the decision of the Israeli Government to approve construction plans for Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa on the West Bank in the Jerusalem area. This decision poses a threat to these

positive developments. The European Union has repeatedly stated that settlements in the occupied territories contravene international law and pose a major obstacle to peace.

The European Union again reaffirms its policy on the status of Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The European Union considers that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation.

The Har Homa construction plans contain the building of a settlement on the West Bank within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, unilaterally expanded by Israel. The call by Prime Minister Netanyahu for the

> "new construction initiative throughout the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, which will entail the building of 3,015 new housing units for Arab residents of the city"

does not change the European Union's rejection of the decision on Har Homa.

We note that the building of houses for the Palestinian population of the city since 1967 has remained far behind housing projects for the Jewish population. The European Union has stated repeatedly its concern that the Palestinians of East Jerusalem continue to be subject to several unacceptable restrictions.

In the interests of the peace process, the European Union calls upon all parties to observe the utmost restraint regarding issues that could prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations. We therefore greatly regret actions taken by the Government of Israel, such as the annexation of land, the demolition of houses, new settlement construction and the expansion of settlements.

The European Union believes that the upcoming redeployment must be credible in terms of territory handed over to the Palestinian National Authority. Anything else might have serious implications for the peace process.

The European Union remains firmly of the view that the peace process is the only path to security and peace for the Palestinians as well as for Israel and the neighbouring States. The European Union calls upon Israel to respect its obligations under international law and once again appeals to the Israeli Government to refrain from building the new settlement in Har Homa and to respect the rights of the Palestinians. To do otherwise would not be conducive to a climate in which rapid and substantial progress in the peace process can be achieved.

The European Union confirms its attachment to such a process and its readiness to participate and assist in every way possible in order to achieve the long-awaited objective of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Oman. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Khussaiby (Oman): Allow me at the outset to seize this opportunity to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, Poland, our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the current month and to express our confidence in your diplomatic skills, which will lead the deliberations of this body to a successful outcome. May I also avail myself of this opportunity to pay a special tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Mahugu of Kenya, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the Council in the month of February.

After the signing of the historic peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, a new hope touched the hearts of millions of people in the Middle East: a hope for peace, tranquillity, stability, harmony and coexistence, marking a new beginning for this war-ravaged region.

My country, along with many other peace-loving nations such as your own, Sir, spared no effort to strengthen the foundation of this peaceful trend in order to make it more solid and sustainable. Unfortunately, sweet hopes are never lasting and we are here once again resorting to the Security Council for guidance and action to salvage what might be damaged by one of the parties to and partners of the peace process.

It is quite comforting at times to listen to some of the statements issued by the Israeli Government concerning how peace ought to be articulated and agreement implemented. But at the same time, it is shocking to view the record of this Government in translating its words into actions. In fact, the latest decision of the Government of Israel to built new

settlements in East Jerusalem in the area of Jabal Abu Ghneim is not only counter-productive, but a flagrant breach of the agreed principles of the peace process and of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968) and 338 (1973), which reaffirmed the illegality of all measures taken by Israel aimed at changing the demographic composition of the Holy City and its status.

Without a doubt, the question of Jerusalem is of particular importance and sensitivity to the overall settlement of the Middle East crisis, which is one of the major reasons why this whole question of determining the final status of Jerusalem was left aside for a while. Taking this decision now, in our opinion, will not only create a volatile situation, endangering the peace process, but will likely give extremist elements from both sides the opportunity to jeopardize it.

It is our view that this record needs to be straightened out once and for all with a clear, united message from this Council that would reaffirm its unreserved support for the peace process in accordance with the principle of land for peace and relevant Security Council resolutions. In our view, the latest decision of the Israeli Government is illegal and ought to be rejected categorically.

It was very encouraging to note that all the statements of the members of the Security Council expressed the view that settlements were dangerous to the peace process.

Peace is a two-way track and it is a contract that has been accepted and signed by the parties concerned. The least to be expected is the full implementation of and adherence to what has been agreed upon. If the Israeli Government believes that only the Palestinians should be expected to live up to Israeli expectations, then it is mistaken. It is about time, in our opinion, for this Israeli Government to live up to its commitment by refraining from such acts and to move forward in the peace process on all tracks.

Finally, I would like to conclude my intervention by reiterating my Government's support for the peace process and for a durable peace in the Middle East that will alleviate the suffering of the people of the region — a peace that will minimize the risk of confrontation and move beyond lip service to concrete steps.

We firmly believe that the Israeli Government's decision to build new settlements in East Jerusalem is, to say the least, wrong, illegal and above all, inconsistent with the spirit and objectives of the peace process. Therefore, once again, we call on the Israeli Government seriously to reconsider its decision and to act in a more responsible manner. If Israel truly believes in peace, this is the right time to prove and demonstrate it to the entire international community.

The Israeli policy on settlements in the occupied territories is a means of wasting time and prolonging the implementation of the principles of the peace process. This should not be allowed to happen. We appeal to you, Sir, and to the members of the Council to demonstrate your firm positions and to send a strong, collective message to the Israeli Government to reverse its latest decision.

The President: I thank the representative of Oman for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Karsgaard (Canada): Canada believes that only through negotiation can a just, lasting and comprehensive peace be achieved, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The agreement signed between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 15 January, leading to the redeployment of Israeli forces from Hebron, was welcomed by Canada as an important step towards restoring momentum and confidence in the peace process.

Canada believes that the construction of a lasting peace requires that all parties refrain from unilateral actions that would prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations. In this regard, it is Canada's view that the recent decision of the Government of Israel to proceed with the construction of an Israeli settlement in Har Homa undermines the trust that is the very foundation of the peace process. While we acknowledge the stated commitment of the Israeli Government to issue new building permits for Arabs in East Jerusalem, this neither justifies the construction of an Israeli settlement in occupied territories nor lessens its impact on the peace process.

Canada views settlement activity as a violation of international law and harmful to the peace process. We call upon the Government of Israel to reconsider its decision to resume settlement activity in the West Bank

and East Jerusalem and to refrain from building housing for Israelis in Har Homa and elsewhere in the occupied territories.

On 27 September, Canada's Foreign Minister addressed the Security Council during its debate on resolution 1073 (1996). As we consider the issue before us today, Minister Axworthy's comments then bear repeating now: Building lasting peace requires building trust.

The President: There are a number of speakers remaining. In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the consent of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.